

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In an Office Action mailed April 28, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 1 through 20 under 35 USC § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over EP 0863004 A1 (Kumar) in view of US 2002/0021325 A1 (Koitabashi).

Claims 1-5, 17 and 20 - Rule 131:

Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of at least Claims 1-5, 17 and 20 was reduced to practice prior to May 1, 2001, the filing date of Koitabashi. In support, a Declaration Under 37 CFR 1.131, signed by all of the inventors and supported by attached Exhibits A and B, is filed concurrently herewith. Based on the facts asserted in the Declaration and supported at least by the documents attached thereto, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of claims 1-5, 17 and 20.

Claims 1-20 - No Motivation to Combine:

Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima-facie case of obviousness with respect to claims 1-20, at least because he has failed to establish a motivation to combine Koitabashi with Kumar to practice the subject matter of any of claims 1-20. Kumar relates to "a dynamic multi-pass print mode correction method" Claims 1-20 each recite a "method of correcting for malfunctioning ink ejection elements in a printing system using a single pass over a recording medium" The Examiner has failed to establish a motivation to combine the "multi-pass" method of Kumar with Koitabashi to practice the "single pass" subject matter of the rejected claims.

New Claim 21:

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner enter new claim 21. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 21 is not unpatentable over either Koitabashi or Kumar, alone or in combination, because those references do not disclose, teach or suggest all of the limitations of claim 21.

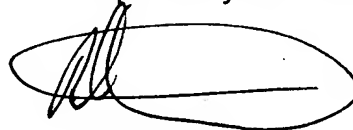
Koitaabashi discusses a "head shading technique" for which, "if a spot or strip of unrecorded area is detected in a test image, the printing duty of the nozzles for recording the areas contiguous to the unrecorded area is increased so that when an image is formed in a normal operation, the portion of the image correspondent to the unrecorded area in the test image will become inconspicuous." Koitaabashi does not disclose, teach or suggest, "wherein said identifying comprises using a drop ejection detector" as recited in claim 21.

Although Kumar discloses "drop detect circuits" (5:24), there is no motivation to combine Koitaabashi with the "drop detect circuit" of Kumar to practice the subject matter of claim 1. Koitaabashi states that, "in head shading, the density of a test pattern recorded by a recording head having a plurality of nozzles is read, and the output of each nozzle is modified according to the nonuniformity in the read density, in order to prevent the occurrence of nonuniformity in density in a normal printing operation." Para. 80. "[D]ensity ratio data are used to create a correction table" Para. [0155]. There would be no motivation to combine a "drop detection circuit" of Kumar with the reading of the density of a test pattern to practice the subject matter of new claim 21.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set out above, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw all pending rejections of claims 1-20 and allow claims 1-21.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: 8/24/2004

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